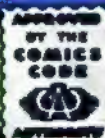


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THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI.

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HE'S
BACK!!
See RUFUS
CARTER in
ACTION
SIDE-BY-SIDE
WITH SHANG-CHI!!

"Call me Shang-Chi, as my **father** did, when he raised me in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father: that my name means 'The Rising and Advancing of a Spirit,' and that my body could be forged into a living weapon through the discipline of kung fu. Since then, I have learned that my father is **Dr. Fu Manchu**, the most insidiously evil man on Earth... and that to **honor** him would bring nothing but **dishonor** to the spirit of my name."

Stan Lee PRESENTS: MASTER OF KUNG FU!

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER



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BITTER HARVEST

"THE INNER COURTYARD OF STORMHAVEN CASTLE IN SCOTLAND, WHERE THE TRANQUILITY OF SMITH'S GARDEN BEARS THE FRUIT OF ODD THOUGHT... ESPECIALLY THE TWO OPPOSING PHRASES, 'NIPPING IN THE BUD' AND 'HARVESTING IN FULL BLOOM'..."

"SOMETIMES EVEN A WEED MUST BE ALLOWED TO BLOOM BEFORE ITS NATURE AS A WEED CAN BE IDENTIFIED."

"BUT THEN, A WEED IS OFTEN SO DESTRUCTIVE BY NATURE THAT IT CAN KILL THE SURROUNDING PLANTS IF IT IS *NOT* NIPPED IN THE BUD..."

"AND SO, ALL *POTENTIAL* WEEDS MUST BE EXTRACTED FROM THE GARDEN, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF MISTAKENLY EXTRACTING SEVERAL OR MANY INNOCENT PLANTS -- KILLING SOME OF THE GOOD TO ELIMINATE ALL OF THE BAD."

"HOW, I WONDER, MAY THIS PERCEPTION BE APPLIED TO THE LARGER GARDEN OF LIFE...?"

DOUG MOENCH: WRITER
MIKE ZECK: ARTIST

GENE DAY
INKER

JIM NOVAK
LETTERER

BOB SHAREN
COLORIST

JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR

JIM SHOOTER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

"A RARE SCOTTISH THUNDERSTORM BREAKS, SILVER SLASHES ON DARK SKY, AND THE PELTING RAIN IS A FORM OF BENEDICTION. NATURE, LEFT TO ITS OWN DEVICES, NURTURES BOTH THE GOOD AND THE BAD, THE ORCHID AND THE WEED, MAKING NO DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE TWO --

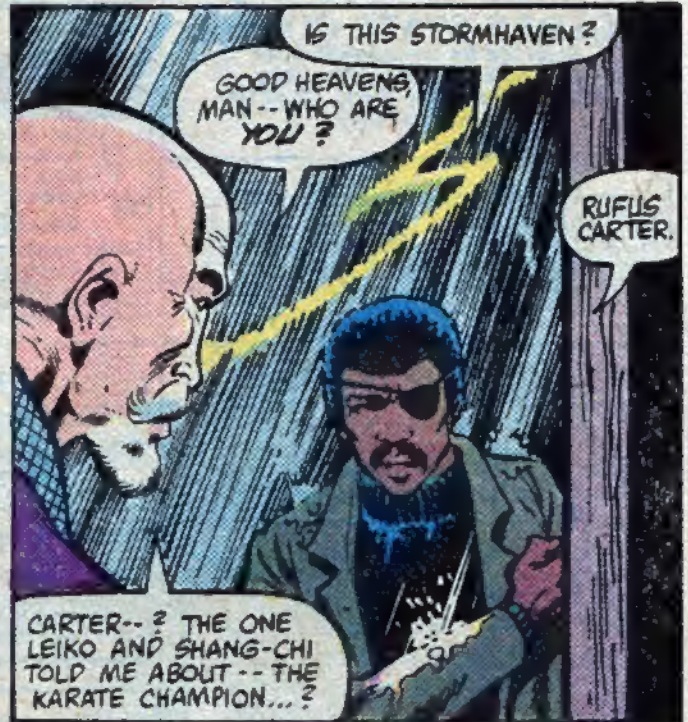
"THE GARDEN IS BOTH THRASHED AND SOOTHED BY THE RAIN, GIVEN LIFE BY NATURE'S VIOLENCE. IT IS MAN ALONE WHO CAN AND MUST DEAL IN ARBITRARY LABELS OF GOOD AND BAD. BUT IN THE LARGER GARDEN THE DISTINCTION BECOMES AWESOME...

"-- LEAVING THE STRUGGLE FOR PREMINENCE TO THEIR OWN DEVICES, AND THE STRONGER WILL PREVAIL, WHETHER 'GOOD' OR 'BAD'..."

"...AND THE LABELS MUST NOT BE ARBITRARY."



YES, WHO IS--



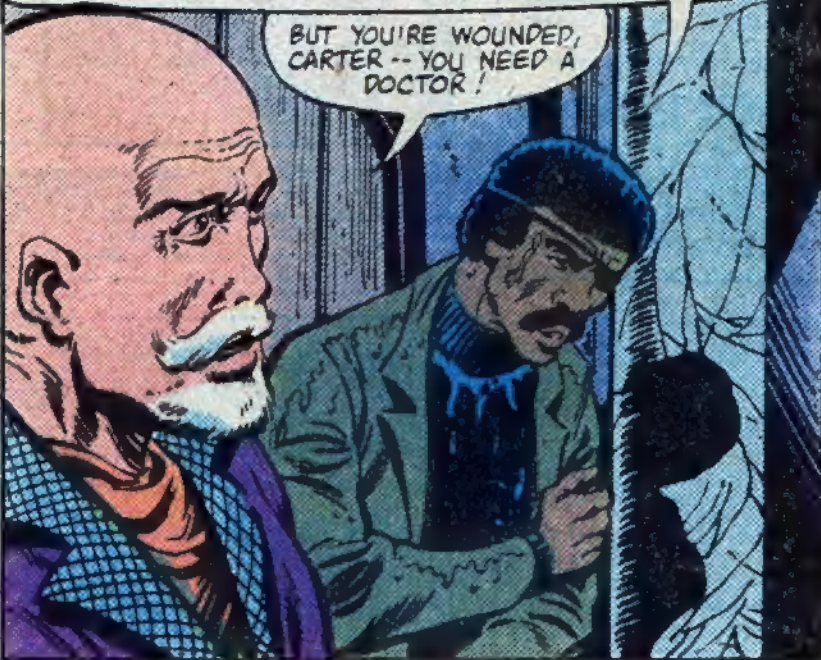
IS THIS STORMHAVEN?

GOOD HEAVENS, MAN-- WHO ARE YOU?

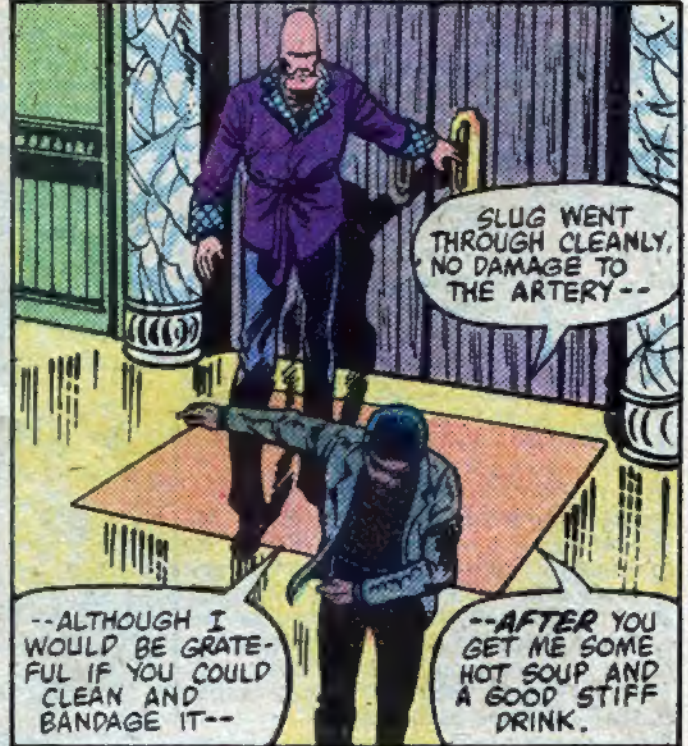
RUFUS CARTER.

CARTER--? THE ONE LEIKO AND SHANG-CHI TOLD ME ABOUT-- THE KARATE CHAMPION...?

... AND EX-CIA AGENT, YES. AND IF YOU'RE SIR DENIS NAYLAND SMITH -- HEAD OF FREELANCE RESTORATIONS -- I'VE GOT TO TALK TO YOU...



BUT YOU'RE WOUNDED, CARTER -- YOU NEED A DOCTOR!



SLUG WENT THROUGH CLEANLY, NO DAMAGE TO THE ARTERY--

--ALTHOUGH I WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD CLEAN AND BANDAGE IT--

--AFTER YOU GET ME SOME HOT SOUP AND A GOOD STIFF DRINK.

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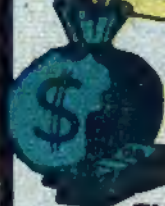
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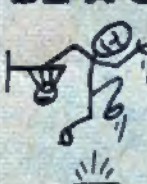
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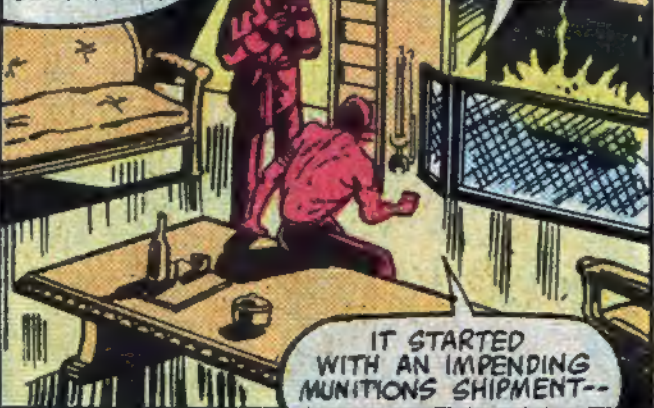
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-- SO YOU WANT MY PRIVATE AGENCY TO COOPERATE WITH YOU IN A "SECRET OPERATION" SOMETHING WHICH COULD, IN YOUR OWN WORDS, "PUT AN END TO FREELANCE RESTORATIONS' FUTURE BEFORE IT'S HAD A CHANCE TO BUILD A PAST."



DID I SAY THAT? MUST HAVE BEEN THE SOUP.

VERY WELL, MR. CARTER, I THINK IT'S TIME YOU DROPPED THE OTHER SHOE-- FROM THE BEGINNING.



FROM THE BEGINNING-- WHICH WAS FIVE MONTHS AGO, WHEN I WAS STILL WITH THE CIA-- I DIDN'T LIKE THE SMELL OF IT.

IT STARTED WITH AN IMPENDING MUNITIONS SHIPMENT--

"-- FROM ISRAEL THROUGH THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR, UP THE EAST COAST OF BRITAIN --



"-- TO THE PORT OF ABERDEEN IN SCOTLAND. FROM THERE THE SECRET CARGO OF MUNITIONS WOULD BE TRANSPORTED OVERLAND BACK DOWN INTO ENGLAND."

WHY THE ROUNDABOUT ROUTE, YOU ASK? LET'S JUST SAY THAT MY PEOPLE-- THE AMERICANS-- ARE INVOLVED, AND DON'T WANT IT KNOWN. THEREFORE, THE SHIPMENT IS BEING DISGUISED AS TRADE GOODS BOUND FOR SCOTLAND.



THANKS. GOOD BRANDY.

HOWEVER, WE GOT WORD THAT THE LIBYANS HAD PIERCED THE SECRET AND MIGHT TRY TO STAGE A LITTLE DISPLAY OF SABOTAGE AND TERRORISM.



SABOTAGE AND TERRORISM?

YES-- BOTH.

NATURALLY THEY'D WANT TO SABOTAGE **ANYTHING** THE ISRAELIS ARE UP TO -- AND THEY WOULDN'T MIND DOING IT IN A SPECTACULAR WAY THAT WOULD TERRORIZE THE WEE FOLK OF SCOTLAND --



-- JUST TO EMPHASIZE WHAT THEY THINK OF ANYONE DARING TO DEAL WITH ISRAEL...

"ANYWAY, I WAS SENT TO JERUSALEM, ASSIGNED TO CONTACT ONE OF OUR PALESTINIAN INFORMERS WHO HAD FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE RUMORED SABOTAGE PLANS.



"THE RENDEZVOUS WAS AN OPEN-AIR MOSQUE..."

"UNFORTUNATELY, SOMEONE ELSE
REACHED THE INFORMER BEFORE I DID..."



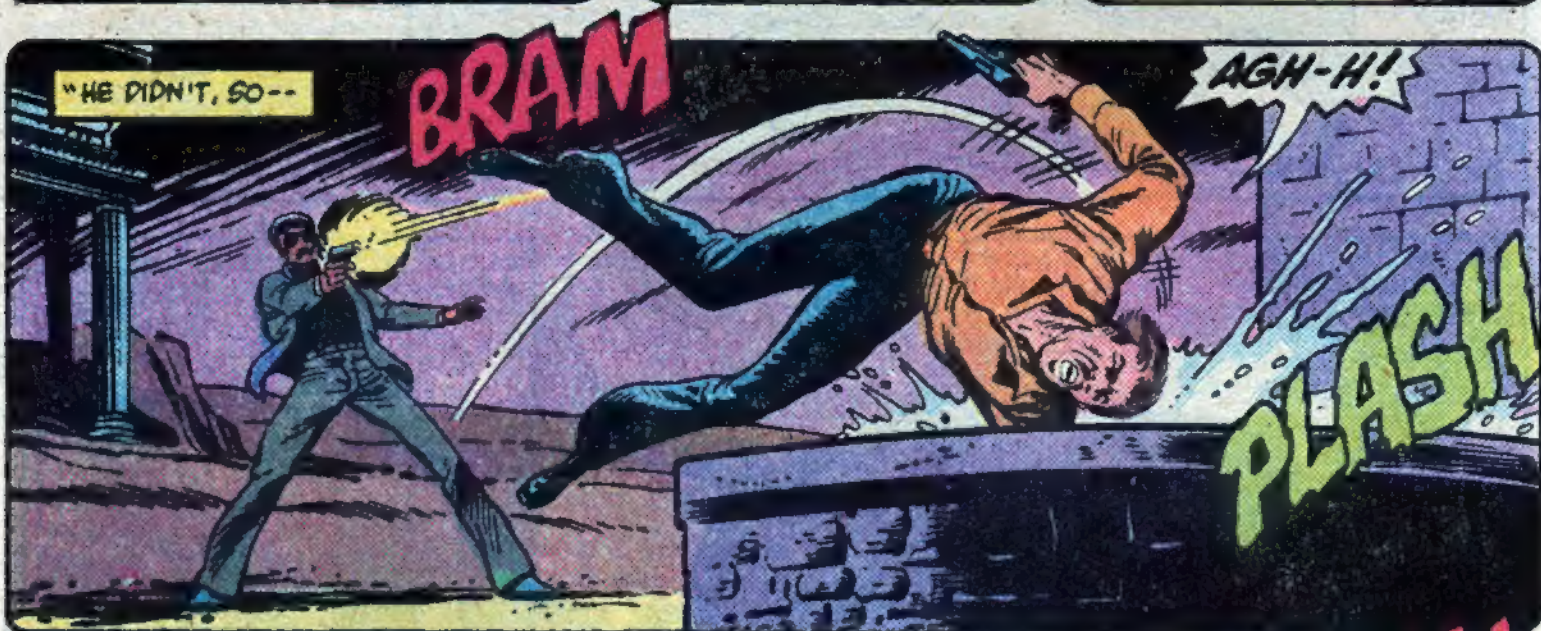
"IT WAS A CRUEL WAY TO
DISAPPOINT ME."



FREEZE! THIS IS THE
LAST TIME I'M
GONNA SAY IT--
FREEZE!!



"HE DIDN'T, SO--"



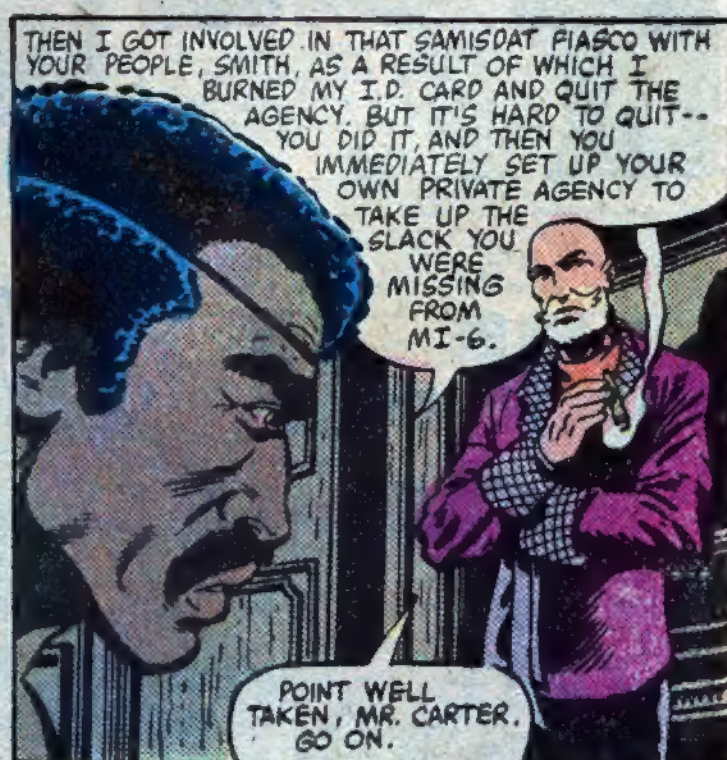
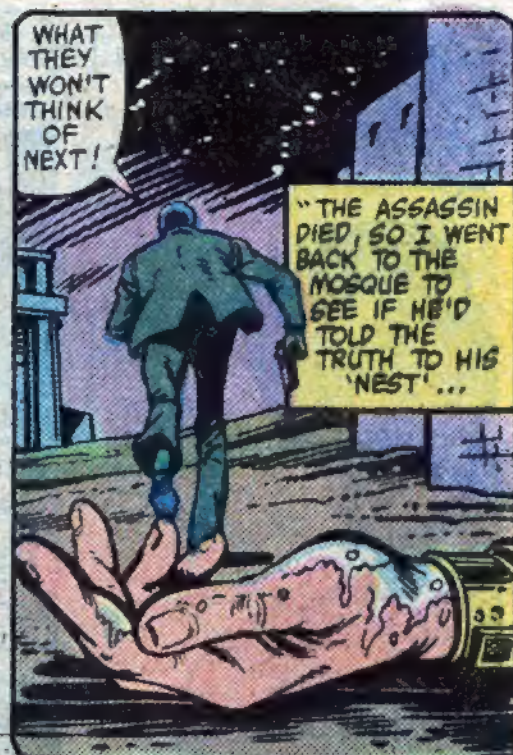
"YOU'RE HURT, MAN, SO DON'T
TRY IT-- BECAUSE THE
ANSWER'S NO. MAYBE I
FORGOT TO MENTION--
AMONG MY MANY OTHER
TALENTS, I'M A MIND
READER."

"YOU'RE WONDERING IF
YOU CAN LIFT THAT
PIECE OF HEAT AND
SQUEEZE OFF A SHOT
BEFORE I--"

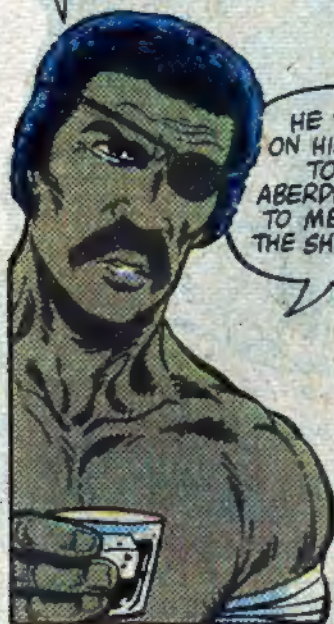


"I TOLD
YOU THE
ANSWER
IS--"





I ALSO LIKE TO SEE LOOSE ENDS NEATLY TIED. SO WHEN I REMEMBERED THE SHIP IS DUE TOMORROW AT DAWN, I ARRANGED TO MEET BLAIR EARLIER TONIGHT.

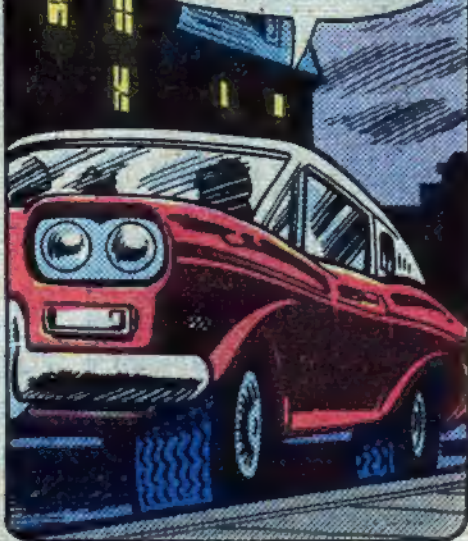


HE WAS ON HIS WAY TO ABERDEEN, TO MEET THE SHIP...

"HE STOPPED ON THE ROAD LONG ENOUGH TO BOGGLE MY BRAIN.

WHAT?! BUT YOU **MUST** STOP IT.

THAT'S PRECISELY WHAT WE MUST **NOT** DO, RUFUS. INDEED, WE MUST ALLOW THE SABOTAGE ATTEMPT TO PROCEED AS FOLLOWS.



WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, NICK? THEY'LL BLOW THOSE MUNITIONS SKY-HIGH--ALONG WITH HALF THE ABERDEEN DOCKS!

THINK, RUFUS. HOW COULD THEY HAVE LEARNED THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS SECRET SHIPMENT? ONLY ONE WAY--FROM US--ONE OF **OUR AGENTS**. EVEN THE SHIP'S **CREW** DOESN'T KNOW WHAT'S REALLY IN THOSE CRATES.

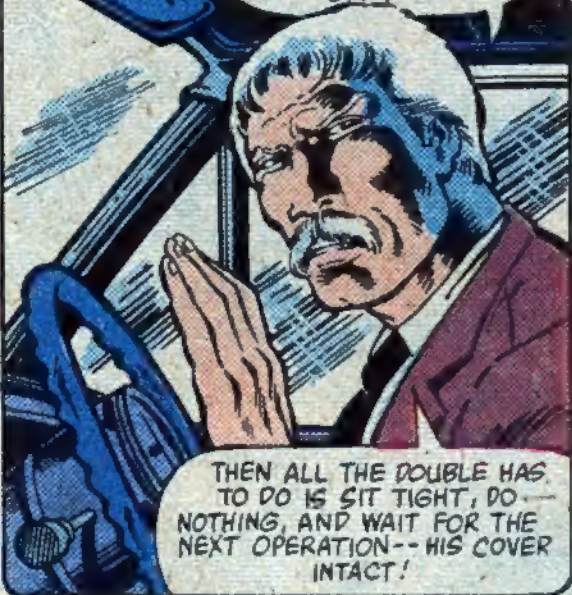


THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO FLUSH OUT A TRAITOR IN THE AGENCY--

--AND DO SEVERE DAMAGE TO ONE OF THE LARGEST TERRORIST GROUPS CURRENTLY OPERATING. WE CAN'T PASS UP THAT CHANCE.

BUT IF YOU--

IF WE TRY TO STOP IT, WE RUN THE RISK OF SCARING HIM OFF!



THEN ALL THE DOUBT HAS TO DO IS SIT TIGHT, DO NOTHING, AND WAIT FOR THE NEXT OPERATION--HIS COVER INTACT!

WE'D SAVE THIS ONE SHIPMENT, YES, BUT WE'D NEVER KNOW WHEN THE DOUBT WOULD STRIKE AGAIN! WE'D BE EFFECTIVELY PARALYZED, AFRAID TO TRY **ANYTHING** FOR FEAR--



ALL RIGHT, IF THE COMPANY WON'T DO ANYTHING, **I'LL** DO IT!

YOU CAN'T, CARTER!

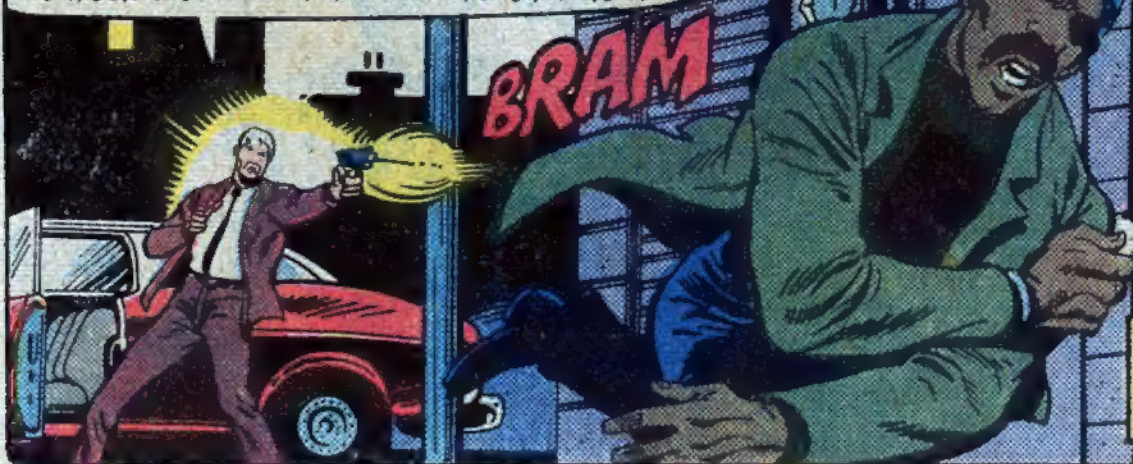
WHO'S GOING TO STOP ME?



YOUR AUTHORITY TURNED TO ASH WHEN I QUIT, REMEMBER?

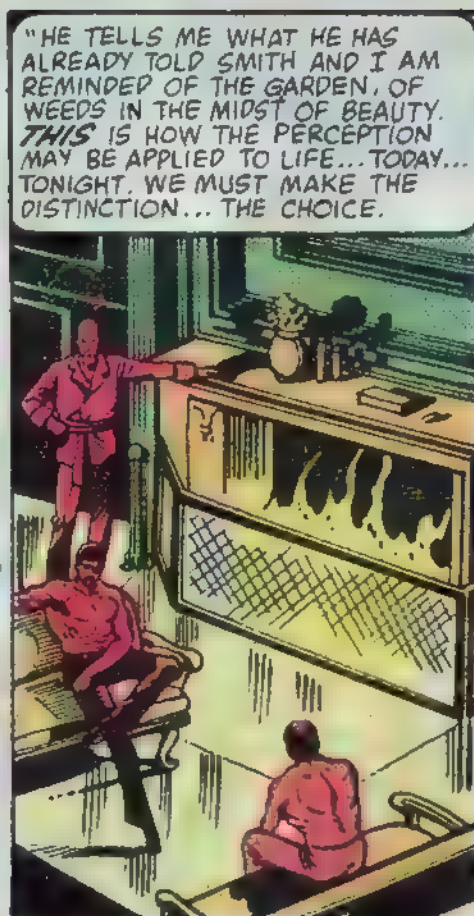
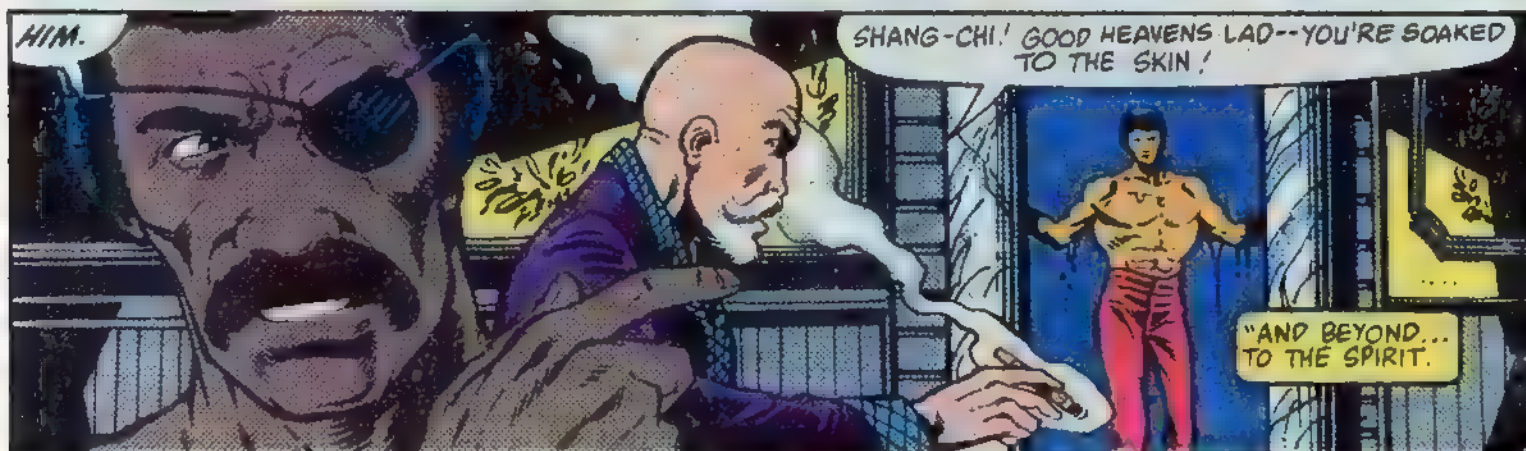
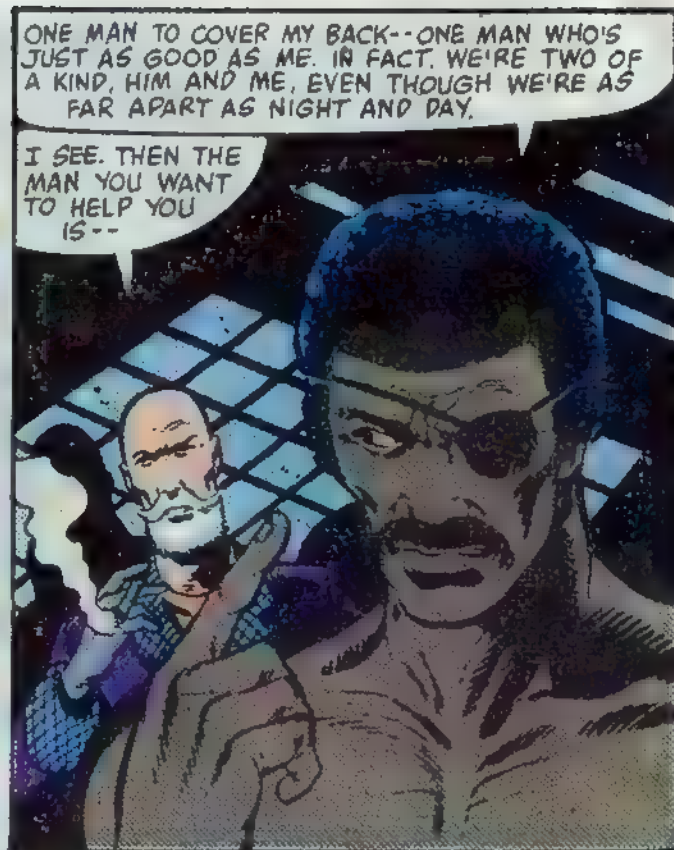
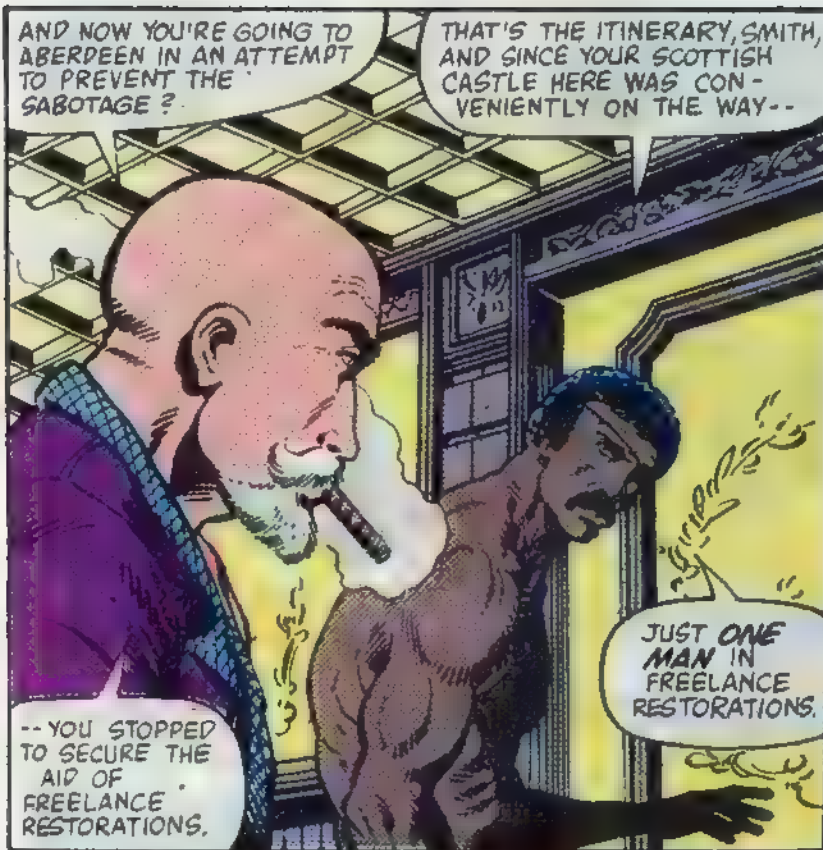
"AND I WALKED AWAY..."

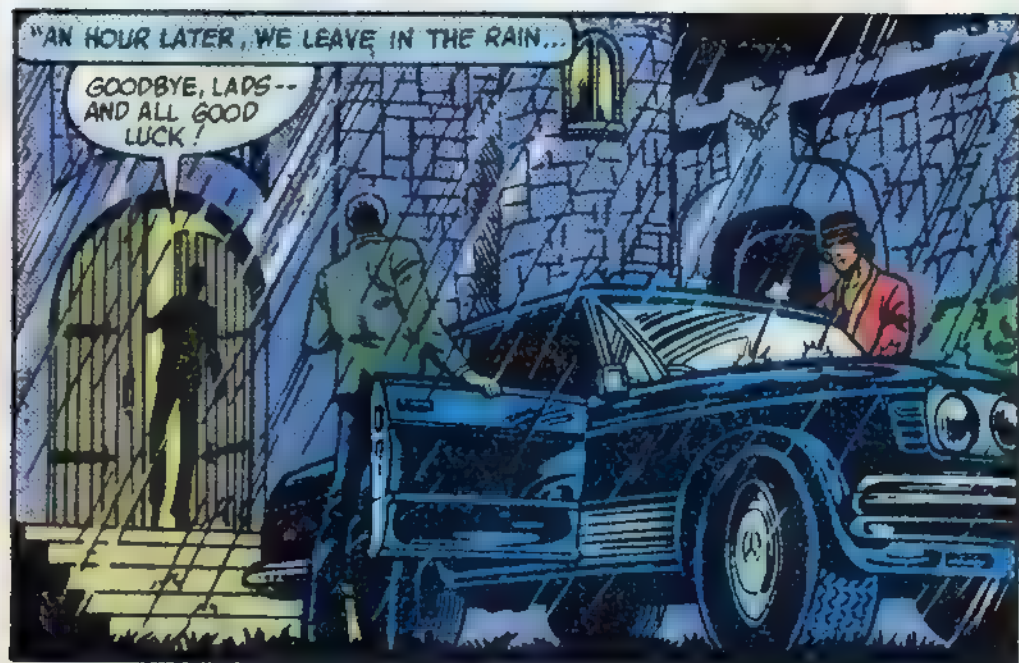
DON'T BE CRAZY! YOU KNOW I CAN'T LET YOU WALK AWAY AFTER WHAT I TOLD YOU! WE'VE BEEN THROUGH TOO MUCH TOGETHER! DON'T MAKE ME STOP YOU!



"...UNTIL HE WAS FINALLY FORCED TO TAKE A SHOT AT ME.

"BUT OBVIOUSLY I MANAGED TO REACH MY OWN CAR AND COME HERE, SMITH."





"AN HOUR LATER, WE LEAVE IN THE RAIN..."

GOODBYE, LADS--
AND ALL GOOD
LUCK!



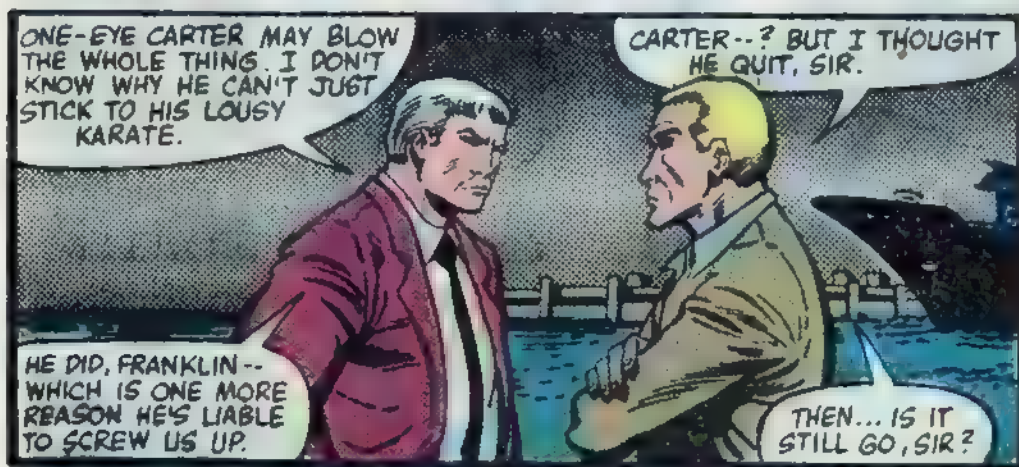
YES, SHANG... GOOD
LUCK... AND DON'T
WORRY ABOUT ME...

I'LL BE
JUST FINE...
HERE...
ALONE...



WELCOME TO ABERDEEN, MR. BLAIR--
BUT YOU'RE EARLY. IS ALL WELL,
SIR?

ALL IS TERRIBLE,
FRANKLIN-- ALL IS
MISERABLE.



ONE-EYE CARTER MAY BLOW
THE WHOLE THING. I DON'T
KNOW WHY HE CAN'T JUST
STICK TO HIS LOUSY
KARATE.

HE DID, FRANKLIN--
WHICH IS ONE MORE
REASON HE'S LIABLE
TO SCREW US UP.

CARTER--? BUT I THOUGHT
HE QUIT, SIR.

THEN... IS IT
STILL GO, SIR?

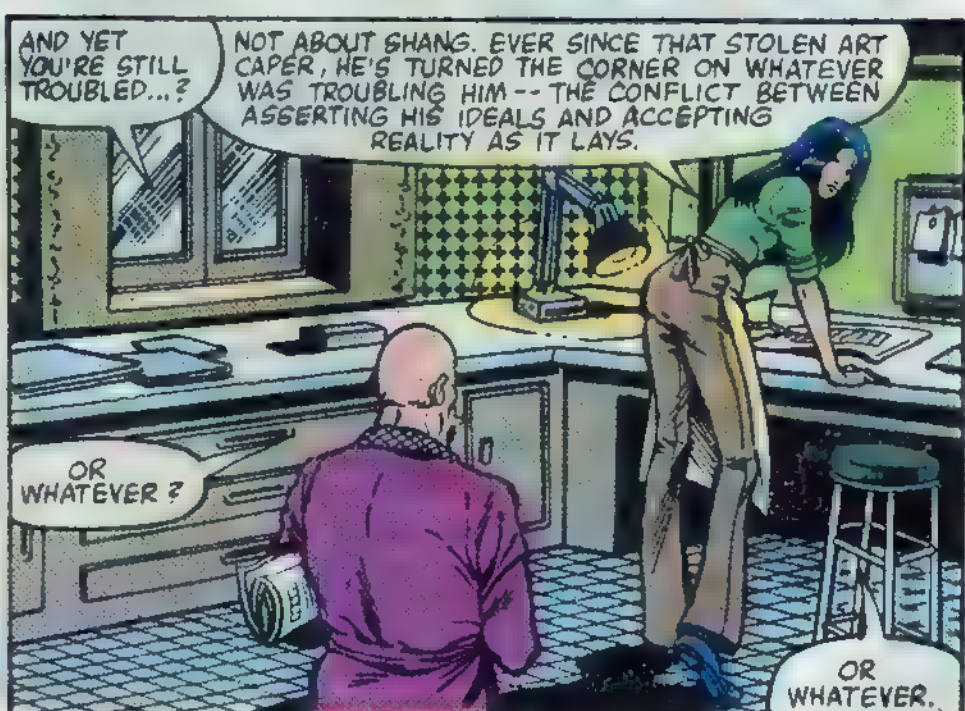


YES... IT'S
STILL GO...
AND DEVIL
TAKE THE
HINDMOST.



WORKING ON YOUR STAINED
GLASS AGAIN, LEIKO? THEN,
I GUESS YOU'RE NOT WORRIED
ABOUT SHANG-CHI GOING ON
CARTER'S MISSION...

SHANG
CAN TAKE
CARE OF
HIMSELF,
SIR
DENIS.

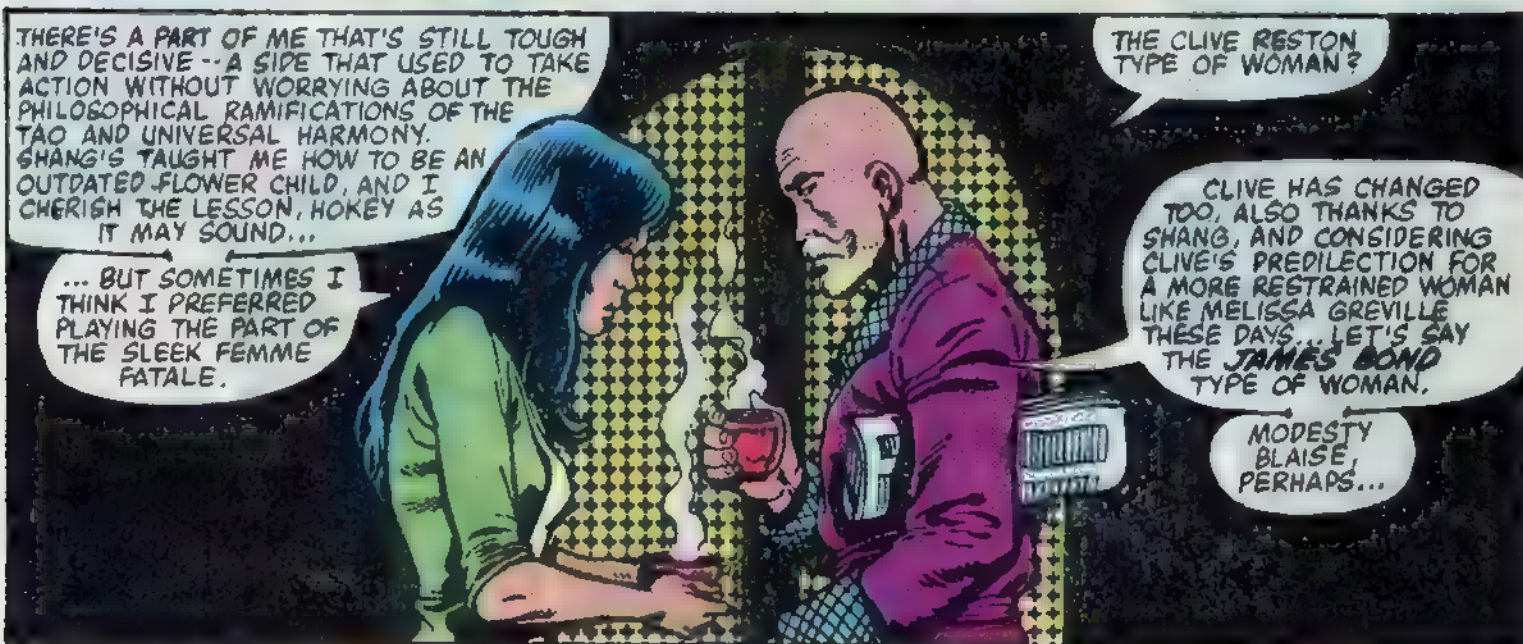
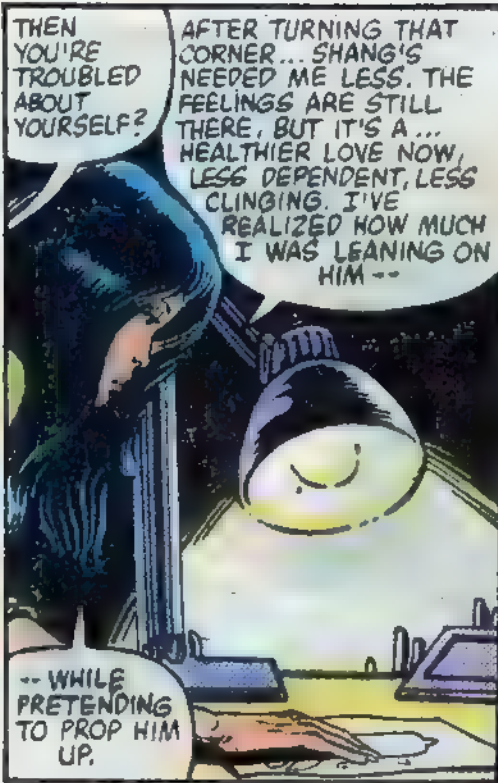


AND YET
YOU'RE STILL
TROUBLED...?

OR
WHATEVER?

NOT ABOUT SHANG. EVER SINCE THAT STOLEN ART
CAPER, HE'S TURNED THE CORNER ON WHATEVER
WAS TROUBLING HIM-- THE CONFLICT BETWEEN
ASSERTING HIS IDEALS AND ACCEPTING
REALITY AS IT LAYS.

OR
WHATEVER.



YES... AS FALSE AS IT IS, I SUPPOSE THAT'S THE FANTASY ROLE I FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE PLAYING...

... IF ONLY I COULD... IF ONLY IT WOULD WORK AGAIN...



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS, LEIKO?



WOMAN SLAIN IN WHITECHAPEL
MOST BRUTAL MURDER IN YEARS

NO... I HADN'T SEEN IT AT ALL... NOT UNTIL NOW...

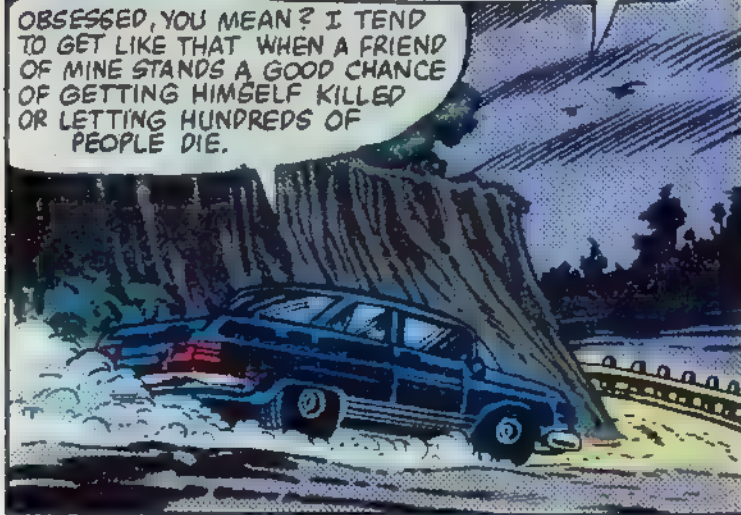
AND... AND AFTER ALL THIS TIME...



"THE RAIN FINALLY TAPERS TO A DRIZZLE, AND DIES. THE SILENCE OF ITS ABSENCE GIVES ME VOICE..."

YOU SEEM... DIFFERENT, CARTER.

OBSESSED, YOU MEAN? I TEND TO GET LIKE THAT WHEN A FRIEND OF MINE STANDS A GOOD CHANCE OF GETTING HIMSELF KILLED OR LETTING HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE DIE.



YOUR FRIEND TRIED TO KILL YOU.

HE SHOT AT ME. THERE'S A DIFFERENCE -- ESPECIALLY WHEN WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A MARKSMAN GOOD ENOUGH TO OPEN MY HEART AT TWICE THE DISTANCE.

THEN HE WAS JUST TRYING TO STOP YOU?



YEAH -- PROBABLY SO HE COULD GO AHEAD WITH SOME HALFBAKED SCHEME TO SACRIFICE HIS OWN LIFE. THAT'S WHY I'M "DIFFERENT" -- I'M OBSESSED.

I SEE... BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.



OH, YOU MEAN THE LIPFLAP JIVE ACT OF RUFUS **SUPER-MIDNIGHT** CARTER? DON'T WORRY, BABE -- I CAN STILL GIVE YA FIVE IF IT'LL KEEP ME ALIVE -- BUT IF I AIN'T GONNA TAKE NO DIVE, WHO NEEDS THE JIVE?



HAVEN'T YOU HEARD, CHI? ALL SECRET AGENTS ARE SLICK ROLE-PLAYERS. I PICK MINE TO SUIT THE OCCASION. WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE?

NONE -- BUT WHAT ABOUT YOUR ARM?



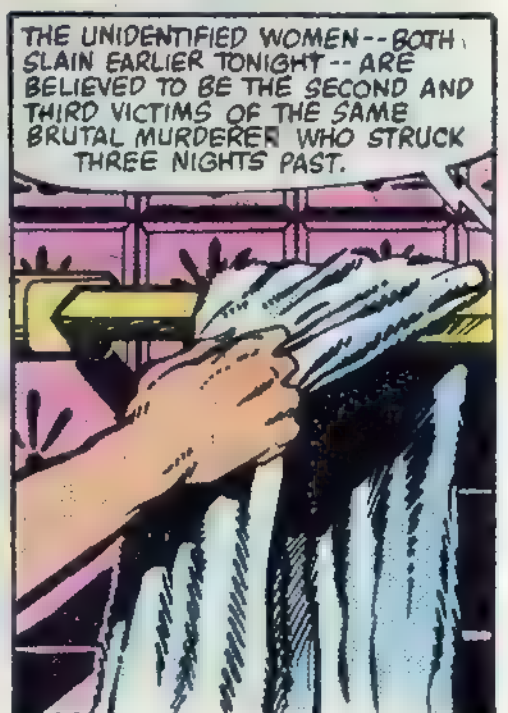
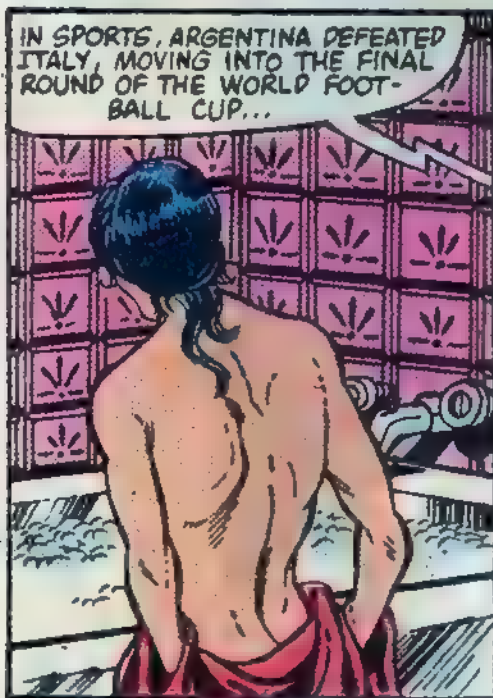
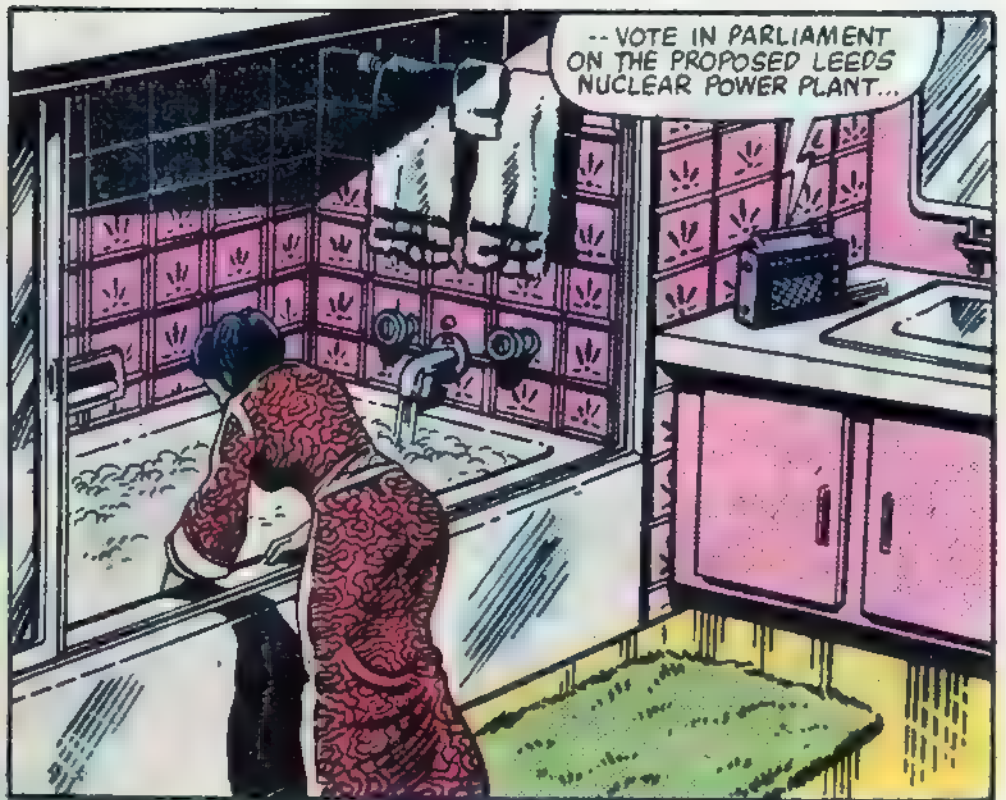
I'VE DONE ALL RIGHT WITH ONE EYE, HAVEN'T I?

Now
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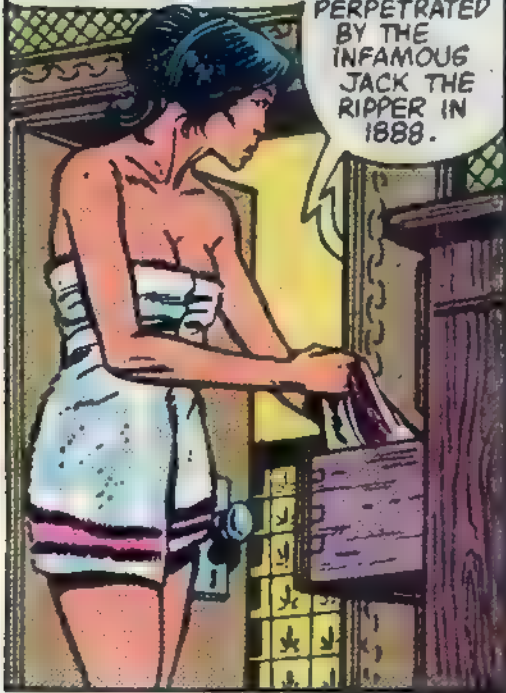


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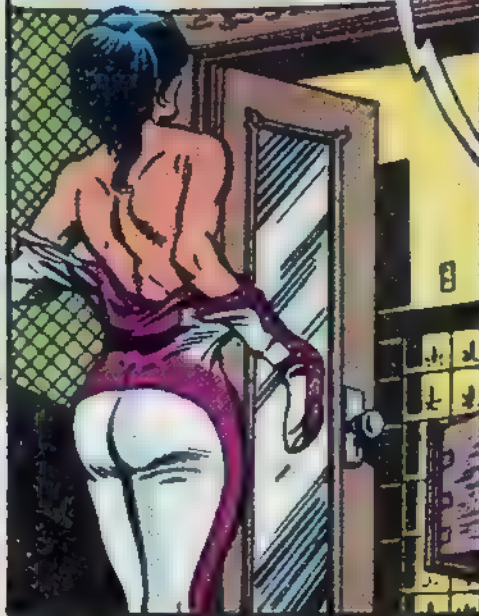




FURTHERMORE, THERE ARE STRIKING SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE THREE RECENT MURDERS AND THOSE PERPETRATED BY THE INFAMOUS JACK THE RIPPER IN 1888.



THE THREE BODIES WERE FOUND ON THE SAME SPITALFIELDS STREETS AS WERE THEIR 1888 COUNTERPARTS, AND ALL THREE WERE WOMEN OF POOR MEANS, ALLEGEDLY STREETWALKERS.

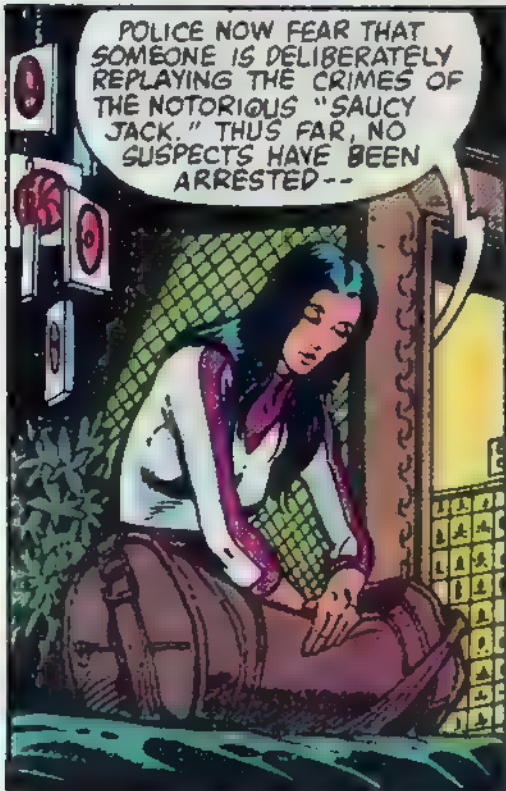


A CENTURY LATER JACK-THE RIPPER'S IDENTITY IS STILL UNKNOWN, DESPITE NUMEROUS THEORIES-- INCLUDING THE RECENT SCANDALOUS ONE POINTING SUSPICION AT QUEEN VICTORIA'S GRANDSON EDWARD--



--THE FORMER PRINCE OF WALES AND ONCE AN HEIR TO THE THRONE OF ENGLAND.

POLICE NOW FEAR THAT SOMEONE IS DELIBERATELY REPLAYING THE CRIMES OF THE NOTORIOUS "SAUCY JACK." THUS FAR, NO SUSPECTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED--



--AND SCOTLAND YARD IS HOPING THAT ONE PARALLEL WILL NOT BE REPEATED--THE OBVIOUS FACT THAT THE ORIGINAL RIPPER WAS NEVER APPREHENDED.

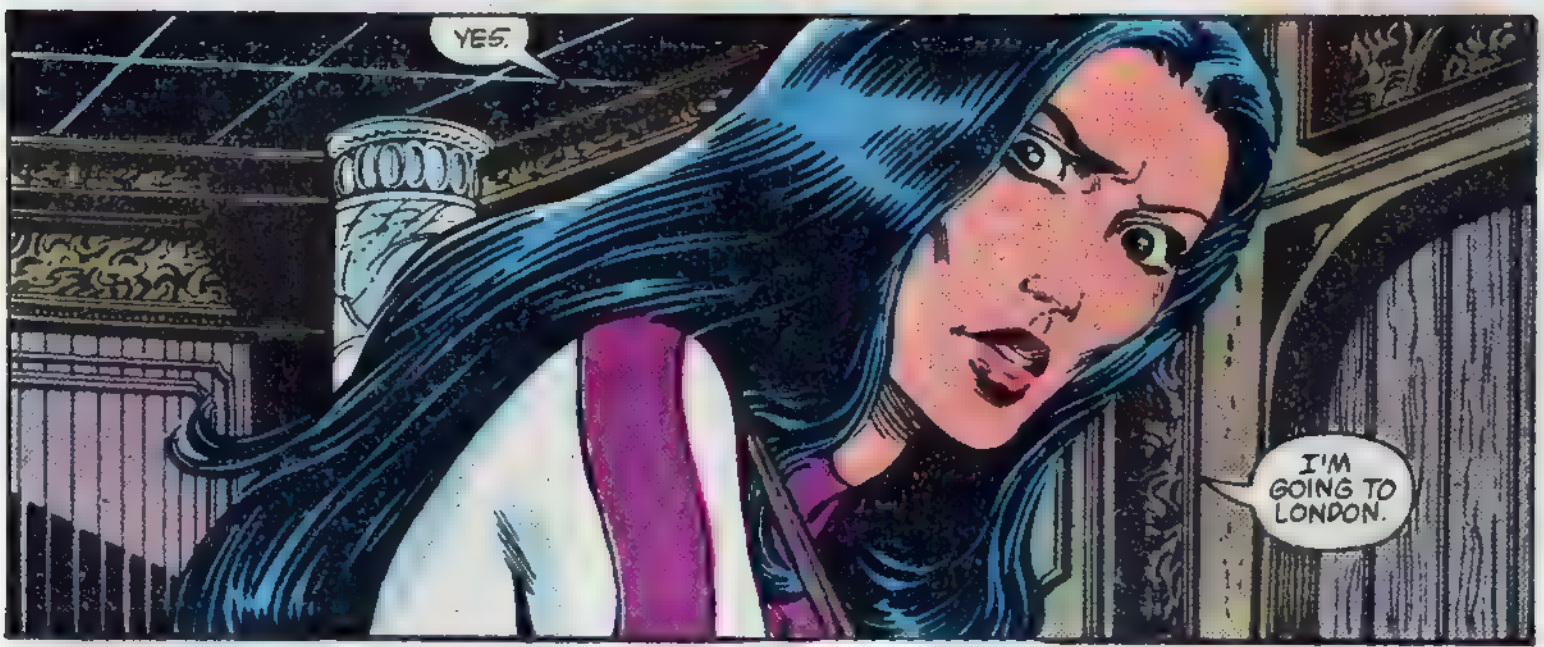


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OKAY, WE SWIM TWO MILES OUT, WAIT FOR THE INCOMING SHIP, SNEAK ABOARD, FIND THE SABOTEUR, AND STOP HIM BEFORE MAKING DOCK. GOT IT?

YES.

I GIVE UP.

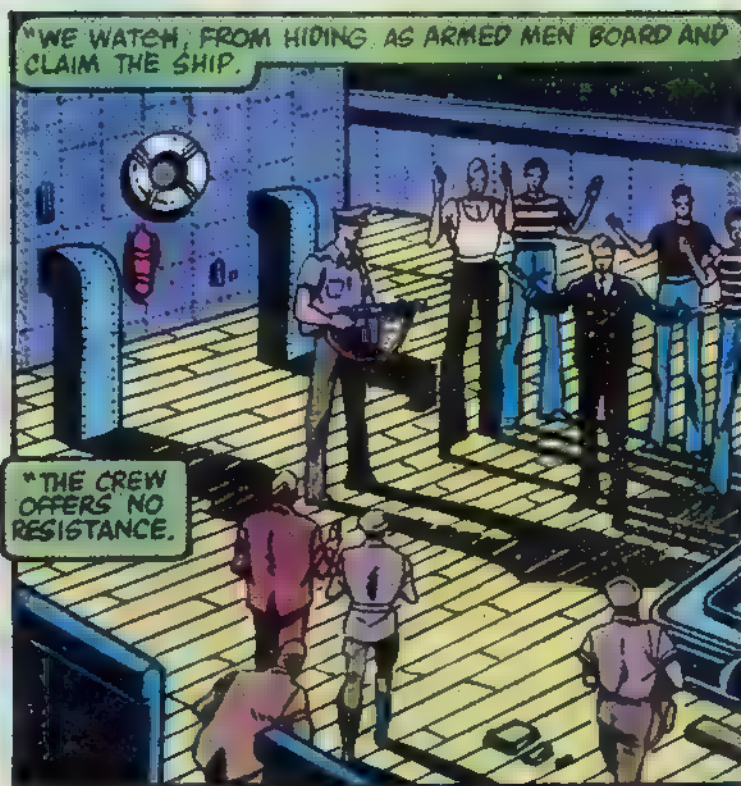
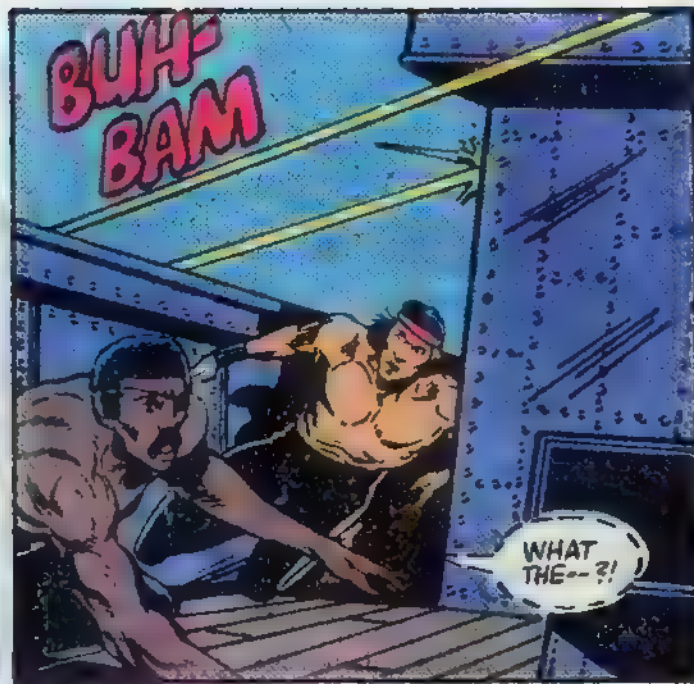
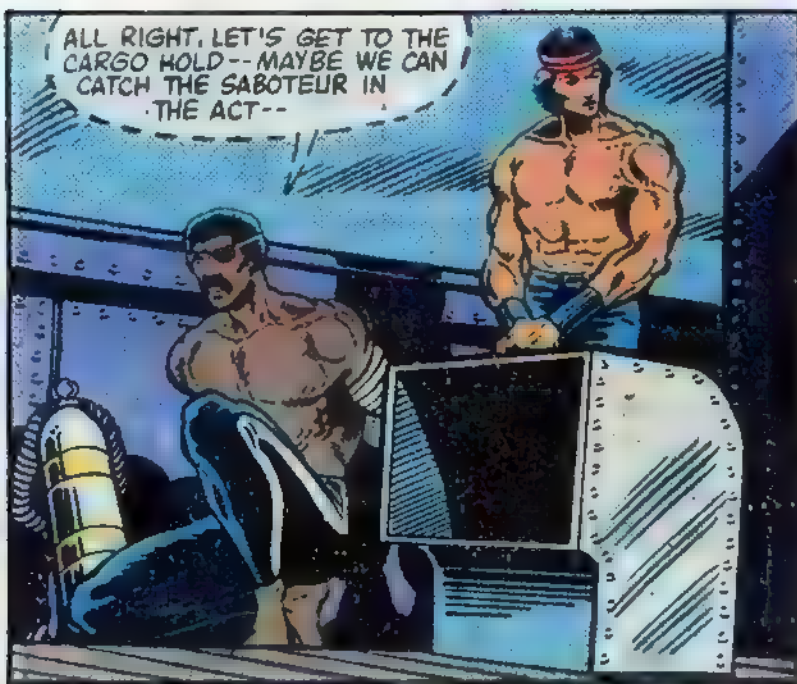
"THE TWO MILES PASS SLOWLY, AS IN A DREAM, THROUGH A THICK WORLD OF COLD DARKNESS..."

"BUT FINALLY--

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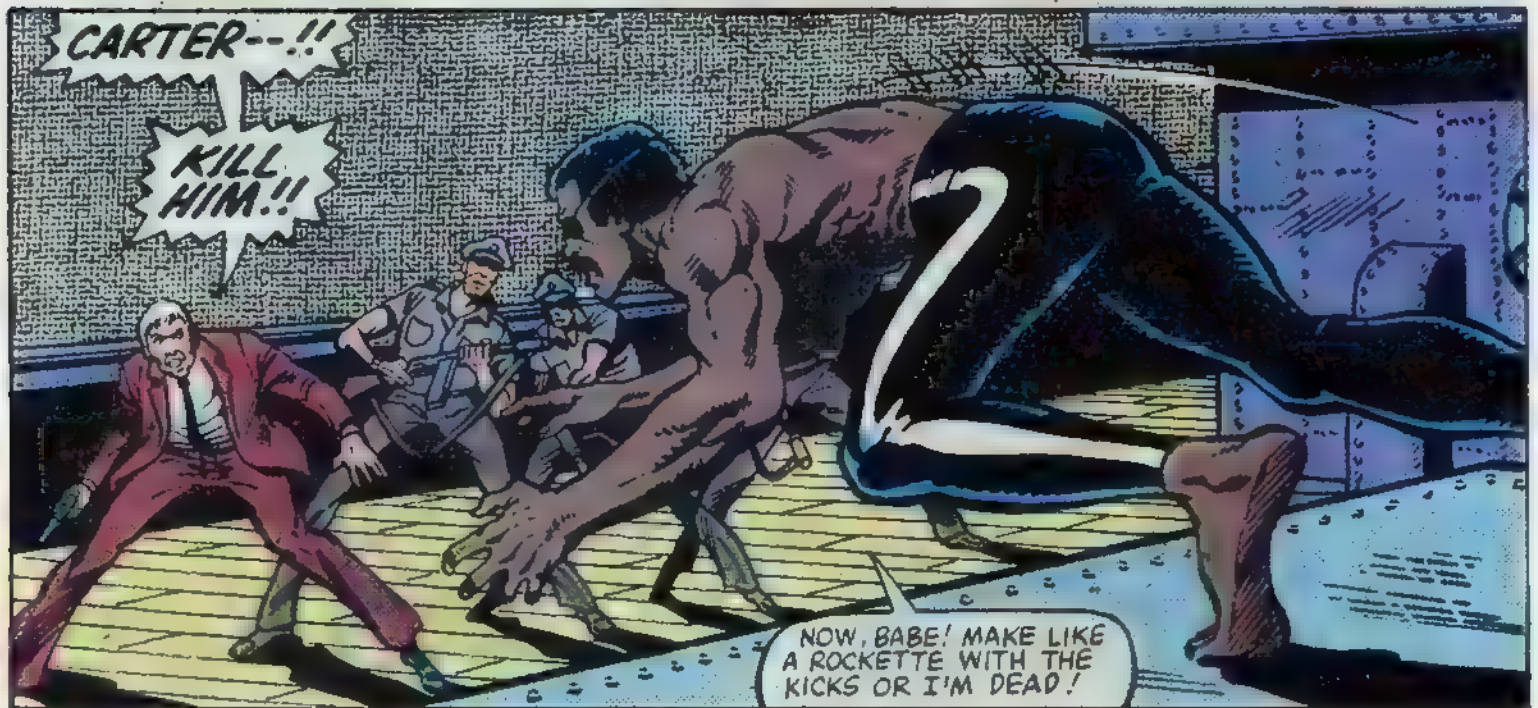
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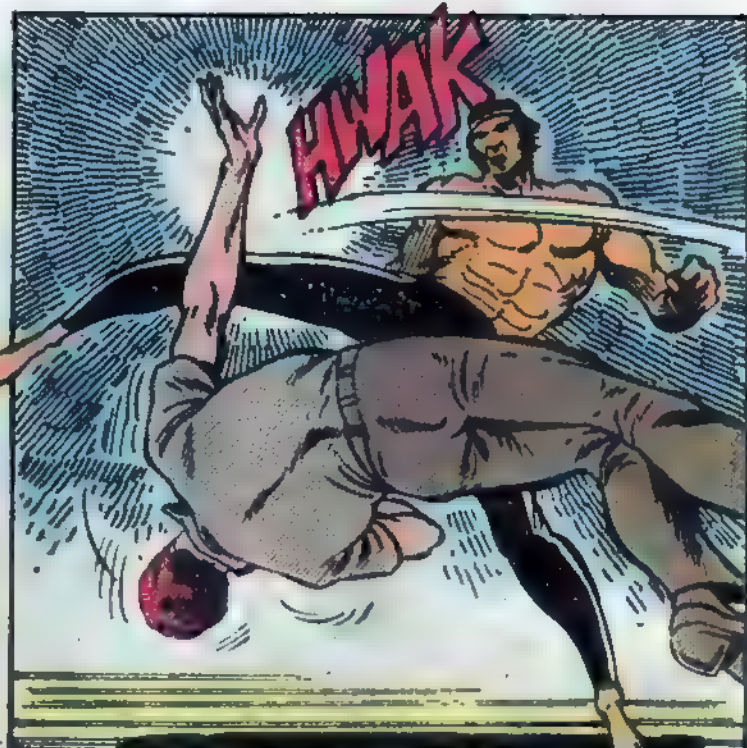
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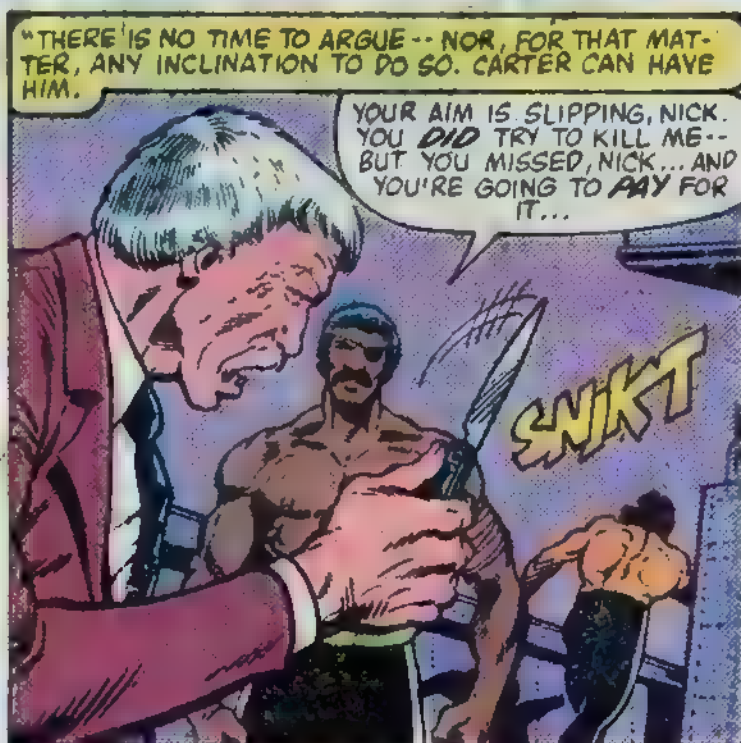
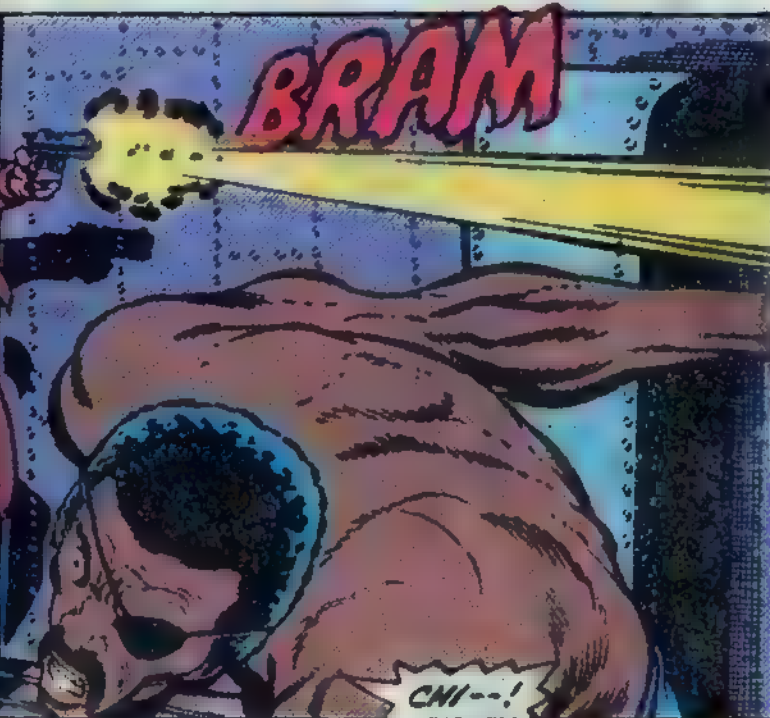
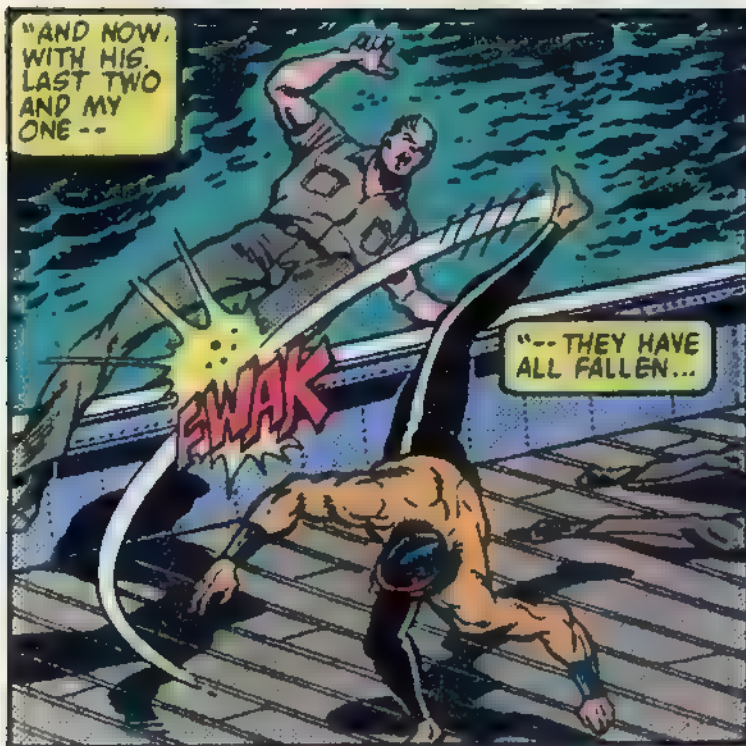
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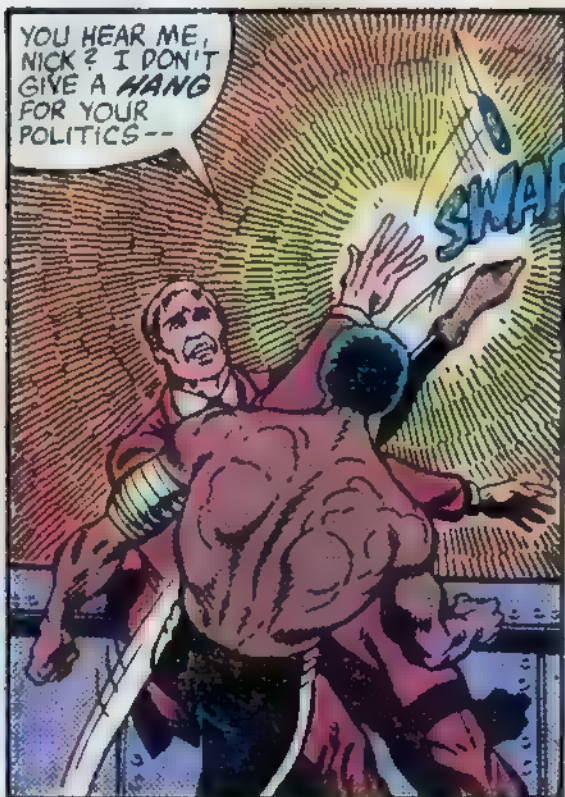
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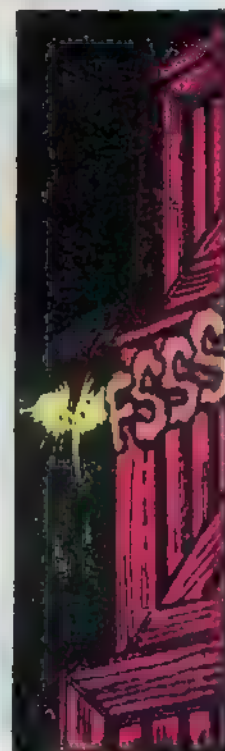
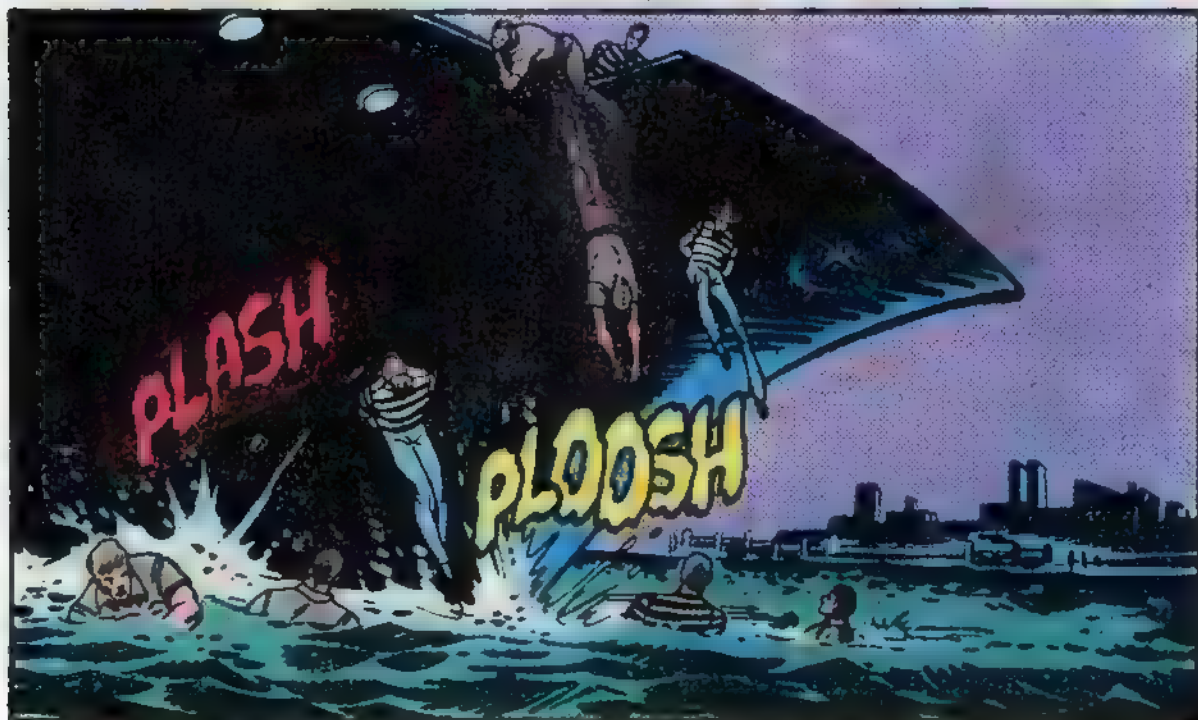
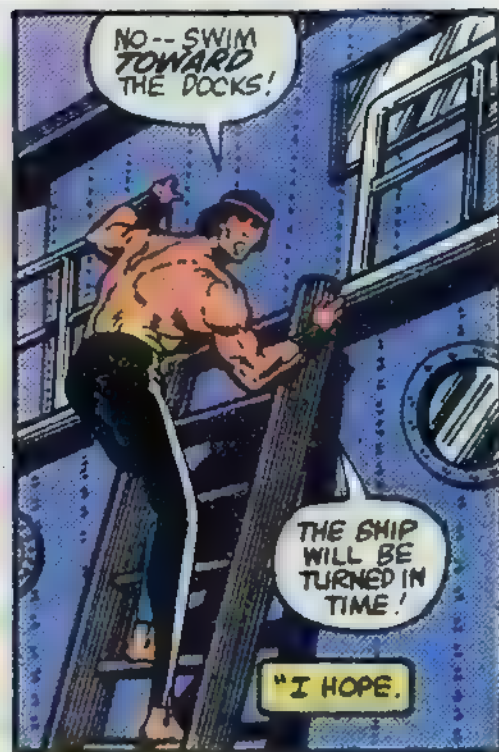
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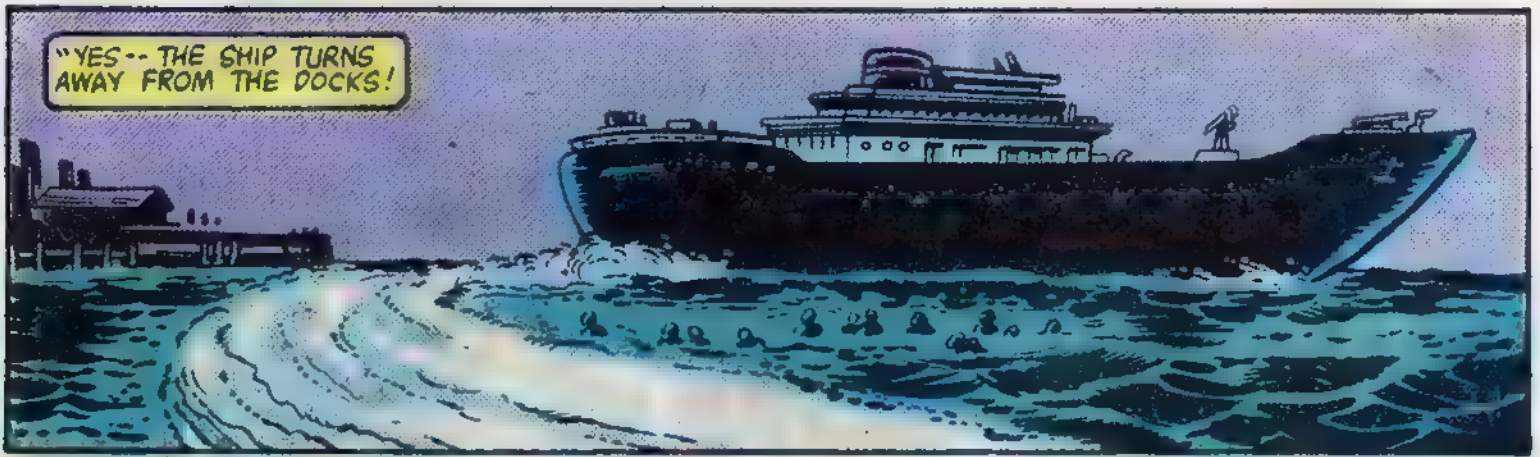
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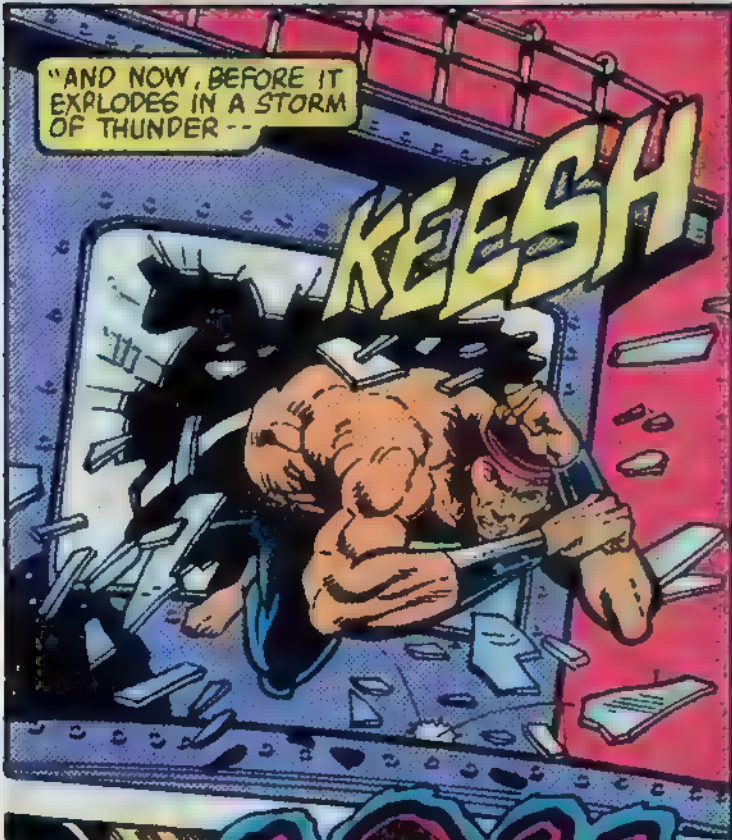
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"YES-- THE SHIP TURNS AWAY FROM THE DOCKS!"

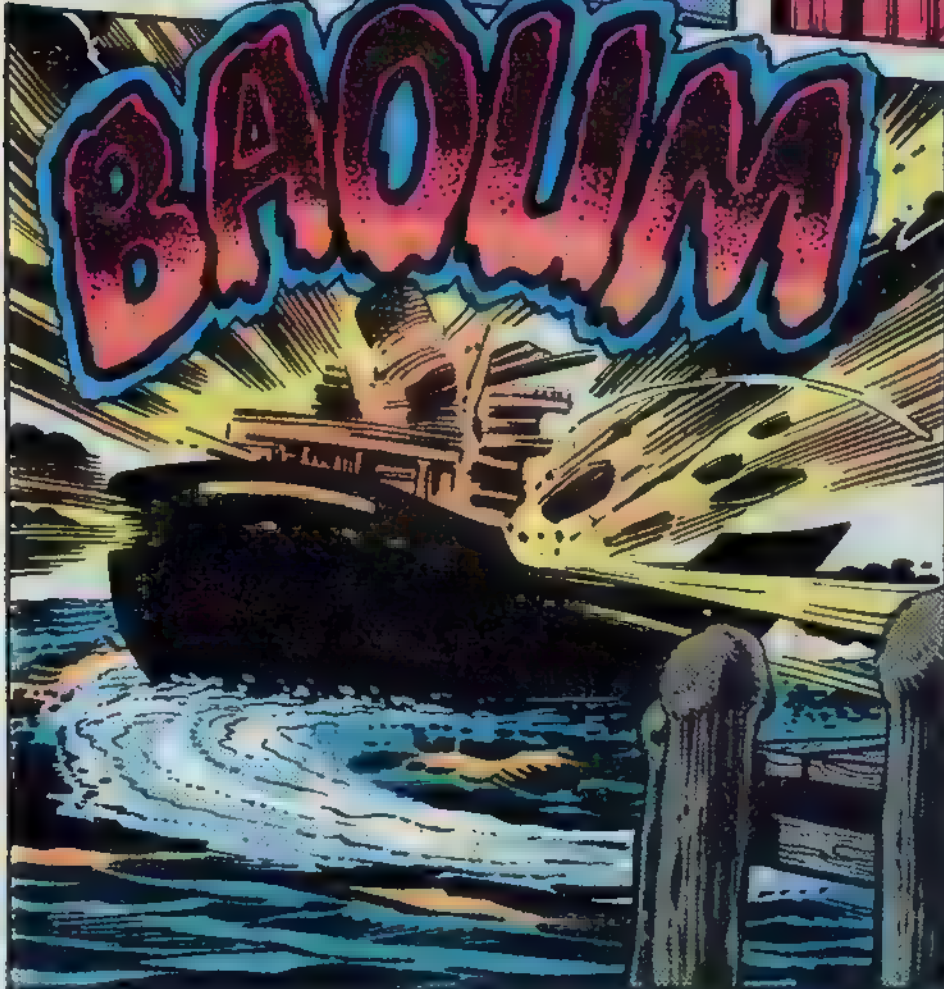
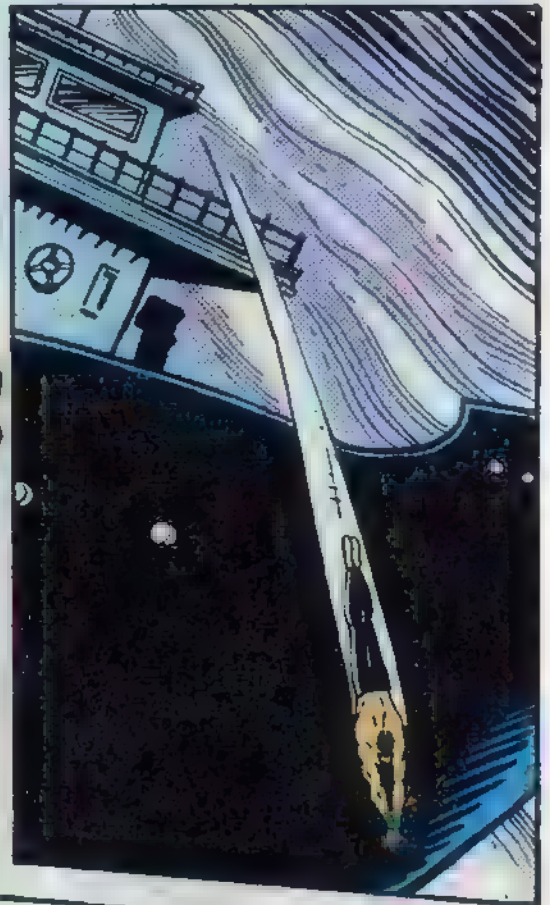


"AND NOW, BEFORE IT EXPLODES IN A STORM OF THUNDER--"

KEESH



FSSSS



BAOUM

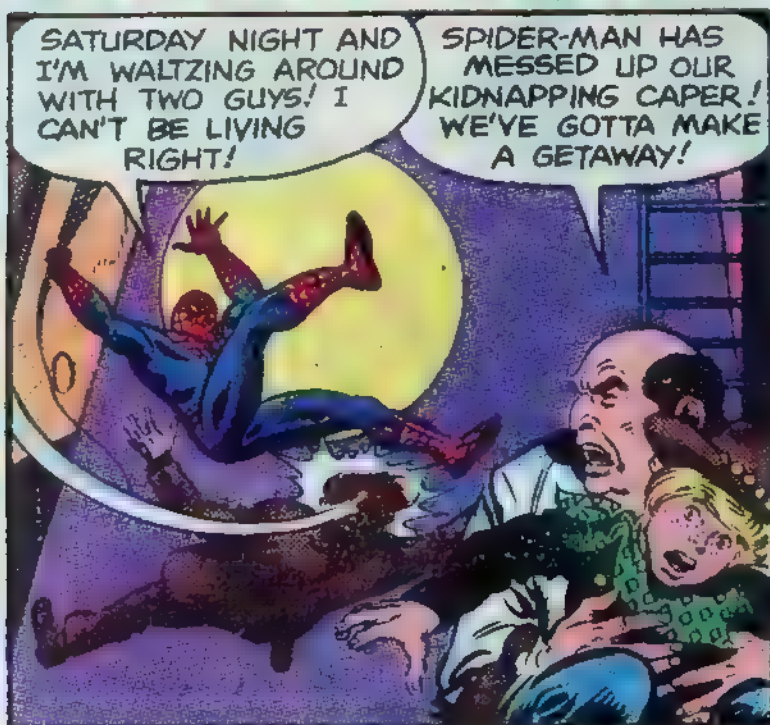


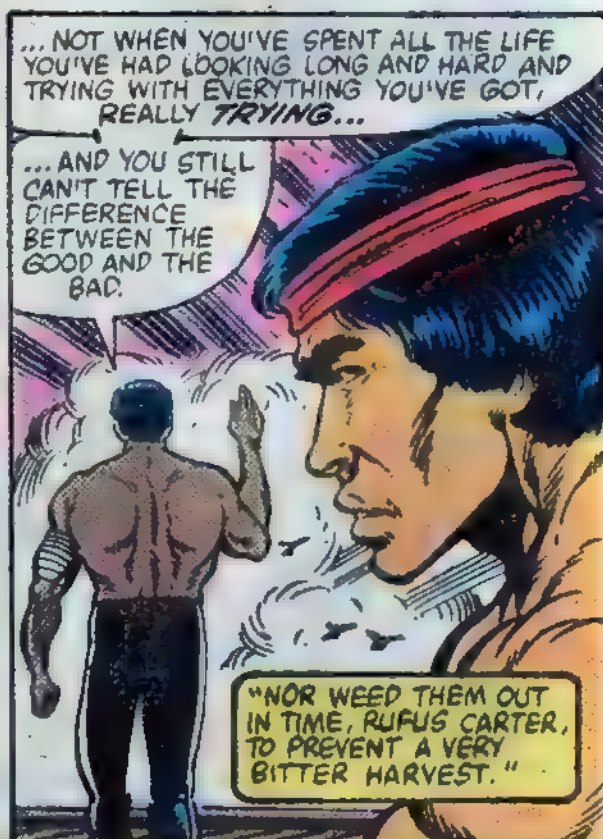
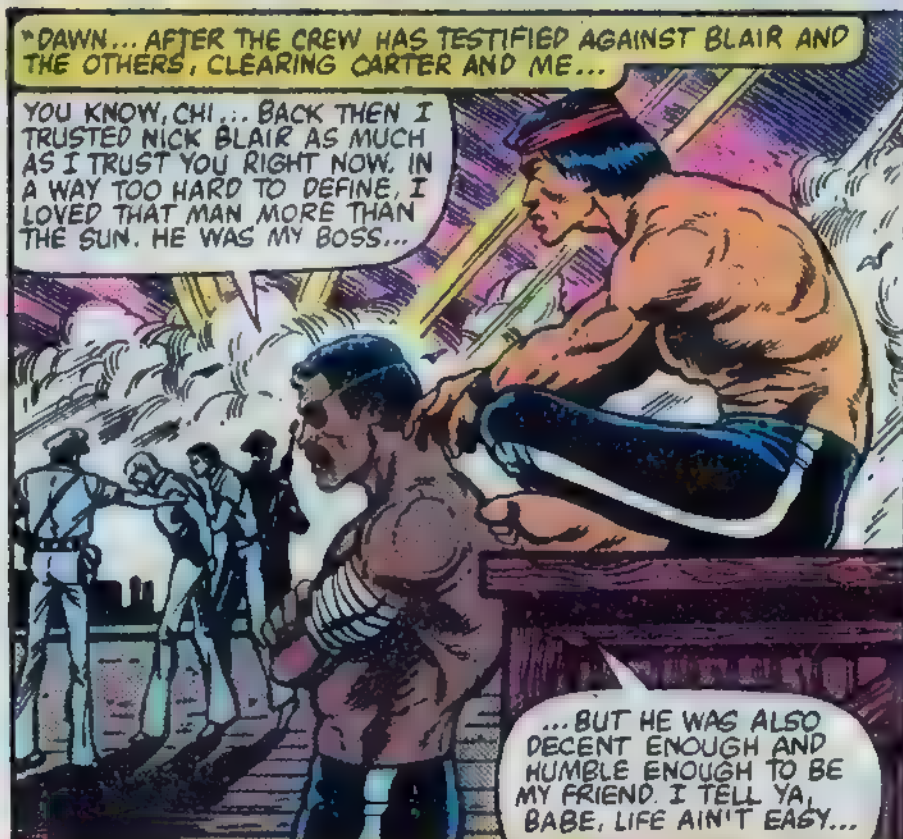
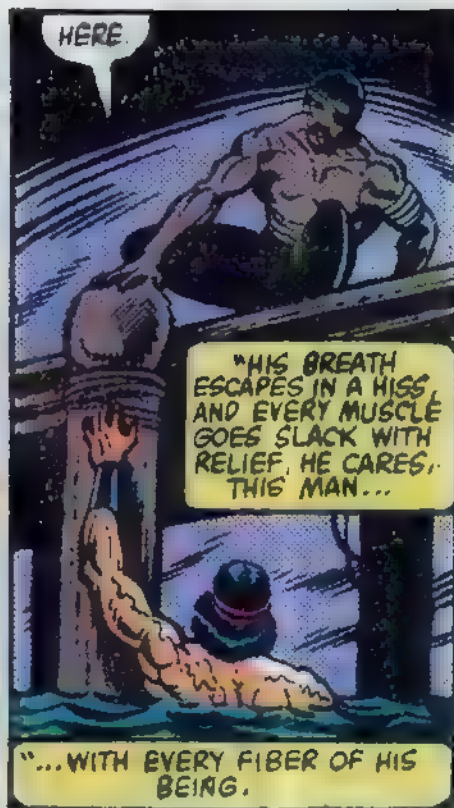
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JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR
BOB BUDANSKY
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Doug and Mike:

Y'know, considering the rapidity of much contemporary fantasy literature, it's not often that you come across relationships which resemble in conception, let alone emulate in execution, those we encounter in the so-called real world. Yet, within Shang-Chi's fantasy existence has sprouted the seeds of just such a relationship and, of course, I'm referring to none other than Leiko Wu.

It's also highly unusual—in fact, so rare as to be virtually impossible—to see a mature male/female union depicted with its corresponding shades of balancing strengths, shared weaknesses, mutual development and future growth (individually and together). But these traits too are evident in your handling of Chi and Wu. Indeed, the fact that an Oriental character has lasted this long and attained its own niche in the comicbook marketplace is significant in itself. Perhaps it's due to your approach—which lies in tapping the characters' specific humanity, rather than their general heritage.

So what, you ask impatiently, am I trying to say?

Simple: Don't spoil this uniqueness by pulling a Pam Hawley. Or, for those of younger years, a Gwen Stacy—not to mention, if you wanna be really topical, a Jean Grey. (Say, howcum it's only the women who get offed all the friggin' time?) In other words, as you continue to chart Shang-Chi's growth, PUH-LEASE don't wreck everything later on down the line by throwing in an "unexpected" and gratuitous death card. When used sparingly, loss can be another means of growth, but death isn't the only option open to you; there are a thousand other variables available and you gents are certainly intelligent enough to utilize them in suitably inspirational fashion.

Still, aside from all that, I applaud your consistency of style and the quality of your imaginations. Yours is one of the very few titles being published that, years from now, connoisseurs of comics will look back on and say, "Now *that* was a series of substance." You should be proud, both of you. I know I am for you.

Earl Davis

State College, PA 16801

Doug,

Shall we begin at the beginning? What a comical pudgy little Charlie Brown Shang-Chi on the splash! Who is Bob Sharen? Nice work. Douglas, I love your fable, except for the words "inferior" and "reclaimed." For some reason, they don't seem to fit the chord pattern. Also, loved the way you patted your own back via Leiko's favorable review of the fable. Nice.

Mike,

I cannot complain about your work. In fact, for composition, figure drawing, and detail, you're every bit as fine as any artist who has drawn the strip. But, like both Weiss and Gulacy, your faces occasionally get the better of you. Especially Reston. And Black Jack Tarr seems to move from 55 to 25 between panels.

Doug,

Love your research and creativity. "Samisdat" has both an Oriental and Slavic flavor, and sounds even more familiar a word than it probably is. I wish the story would have allowed a longer pause in the action and dialogue for the set-up to the "diversion." By the way, whence comes the apt term "tradecraft"?

Doug and Mike,

Action and adventure gripping and clawing for our attention in a violent sweep of pages—yet still, a pause for Shang-Chi's thoughts, recalling issue #20 and the initiation of dichotomy between Shang-Chi's activity and passivity in contrasting thought captions and speech balloons. (But why wasn't Lu Sun mentioned among Shang-Chi's friends? Steve Englehart's characters ain't

good enough for you, Moench?) Maybe someday Shang-Chi will be able to save without hurting, create without destroying. But, sad to say, I don't think so.

Anthony Adams

Pembroke Park, FL 33023

"Samisdat" is an authentic word meaning "passed from hand to hand, growing with each passage." There also exists an "underground" magazine called *Samisdat*, published in the USSR. Finally, one of those Jeanne Dixon-like "psychics" (perhaps Dixon herself) recently predicted a near-future revolt in the Soviet Union, a revolt which would begin quietly enough and in a very minor way but which would geometrically increase in size and intensity as "the word" is passed; it would be led, according to the prognostication, by a coalition of disenchanted workers operating under the banner "Samisdat."

"Tradecraft" is by now a commonly accepted term for spying, especially as pertaining to British espionage. While not sure if it's used in the real world of MI-6, I first came upon the term (if memory serves accurately) in John LeCarre's chronicles of George Smiley in the fictional MI-6 realm of "The Circus." And since LeCarre seems to be accurate in other matters...

Finally, I enjoyed Steve Englehart's initial Shang-Chi stories as much as anyone. If you'll check again, you'll see Steve and Jim Starlin's M'Nai character amongst the grouping of Chi's friends. An hour or so of enlightened chat with Lu Sun, however, may make for an extremely interesting encounter but is hardly the basis for a firmly held friendship.

Chord pattern—??

Marvel,

It happens time and time again, so perhaps these words are just so much blowing in the wind, but still I try. It starts when characters become real, deep, consistent, when the action is fast, beautifully staged, and always essential to the plot, when the reader is hooked by both the storyline and the sustained high standard of art. So I ask: Why? Why do sales figures become so important? Must MASTER OF KUNG FU follow the well-blazed trail of the Silver Surfer, Warlock, or Omega (stunted early in its growth and later butchered in a pair of DEFENDERS stories)? I have learned and grown with Shang-Chi; my spirit truly rises and advances in those precious twenty minutes each month. I have been consumed by his life and have vicariously experienced his entire gamut of emotions. And now, just as he has sent his father off to certain defeat, for the second time, must I lose the beauty of his words and movements? Must I lose the rhythm and involved simplicity of Doug Moench's words, the strength and care of Mike Zeck's art? Must you cancel the most carefully conceived and executed work ever produced at Marvel?

Lord, I hope not. Please tell me that I have misinterpreted the yellow blurb at the end of the letters page in issue #89.

Timothy Schwindinger

Kendall Park, NJ 08824

You have misinterpreted the yellow blurb at the end of the letters page in issue #89, Tim. (You can sigh with relief now.) When we stated our aim of "shifting gears to give Shang-Chi a shot in the arm," we were referring to the quality of the series' content and not to sales figures—although, of course, increased sales are hardly frowned upon.

To celebrate MOKF's staying power—as well as our 100th anniversary—next issue is a double-sized dose of dynamite called "Red of Fang and Claw, All Love Lost." And believe us, it's not what you expect!

See you then.

—Doug Moench

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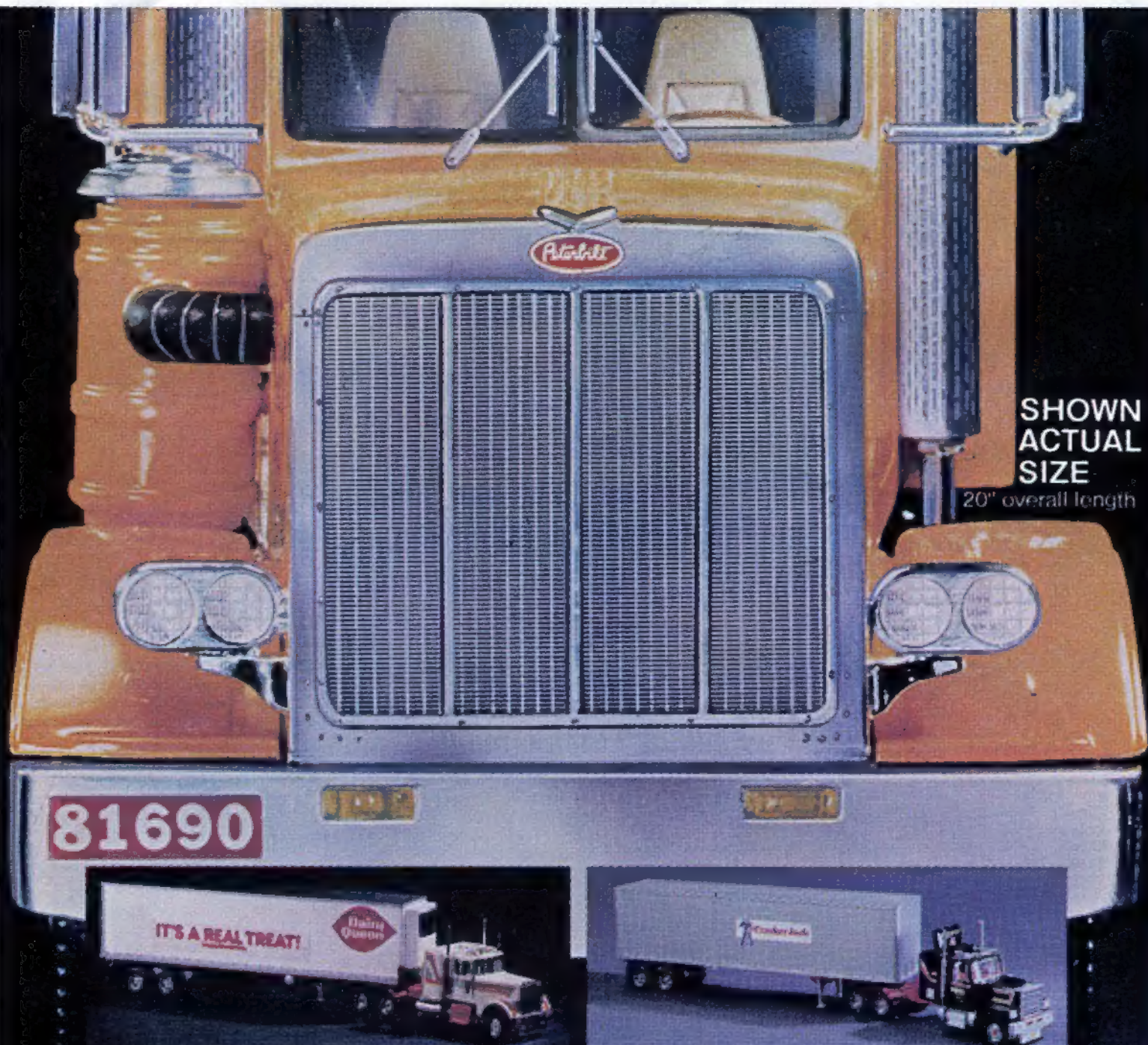
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